

Using Rhetorical Devices

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Close Reading, Graphic Organizer, Marking the Text, SOAPSTone, Visualizing

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Rhetorical devices are techniques a writer uses to evoke an emotional response from the audience.

My Notes

S e r m o n

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was born in Connecticut as the only son in a family of eleven children. He entered Yale College before age 13. After graduating at 17, he entered into theological studies and began preaching before he was 19. During his ministry, he wrote several books of spiritual philosophy. His writings have endured for more than 200 years and have led to his consideration by many as one of the greatest theologians this country has produced.

From *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

by Jonathan Edwards

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil work has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is

nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus are all you that never passed under a great change of heart by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, and may be strict in it, you are thus in the hands of an angry God; it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.

However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the fames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment....

LITERARY TERMS

Argument by analogy is a comparison of two similar situations, implying that the outcome of one will resemble the outcome of the other.

An **extended metaphor** is a comparison that extends over several lines or an entire poem.

Repetition is the use of any element of language — sound, word, phrase — more than once.

My Notes



Using Rhetorical Devices

The following graphic organizer presents the definitions of some common rhetorical devices used in speeches (examples are from Kennedy's Inaugural Address). Identify other examples of these devices in the speeches of Jonathan Edwards and Patrick Henry. Explain the effect of the device.

Rhetorical Device and Example	Other Examples	Effect
Repetition (anaphora): Repetition at the beginnings of clauses, lines, or sentences. (In Chunks 3-8, Kennedy repeats "To those...")		
Aphorism: A concise statement of truth. (In Chunk 15, Kennedy requests, "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.")		
Parallelism: The use of repeated grammatical structures. (In Chunk 2 "...we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship...")		
Allusion: A direct or indirect reference to something from history, the Bible, etc. (In Chunk 10, the direct reference to the Book of Isaiah)		
Rhetorical Question: A question for which the answer is obvious. (In Chunk 14, Kennedy asks, "Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind?")		
Argument by Analogy: A comparison of two similar situations, implying that the outcome of one will resemble the outcome of the other. (In Chunk 4, "those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.")		
Metaphor and Simile: Comparisons of two unlike things. (In Chunk 11: "And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion...")		